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NEWS RELEASE

Oct. 2, 1996

UTU, UM ADMINISTRATION SETTLE CONTRACT DISPUTE

MISSOULA—

University Teachers' Union officials and University of Montana administration representatives settled on Tuesday the dispute which began late last spring over what the union argued were faculty contract violations by the administration.

The settlement nullifies the recent UTU decision to proceed to formal arbitration.

"It was a true compromise," UM Associate Provost Fritz Schwaller said. "We feel good. It was truly a collaborative process. I think it's something the union, the administration and the commissioner of higher education can work with."

The main issue in the dispute was the administration's claim to have broader authority for assigning faculty additional classes than UTU officials believe the contract allows. Also disputed was the appeals process by which faculty can seek redress for being assigned extra classes.

UTU grievance officer Mike Kupilik said that in reaching a settlement, the administration agreed to contract language that says a faculty member cannot be assigned an extra class without prior consultation and agreement.

"And if prior agreement cannot be reached, then it will be settled by a committee as provided for by the contract," he said. That committee will comprise two faculty members chosen by the faculty, two faculty members chosen by the administration and one faculty member chosen by the other four members of the committee.

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The administration also agreed to a workload increase of 16 percent rather than 20 percent as it had previously called for, Kupilik said.

The settlement calls for increasing externally funded research and setting up a council to study the current level of opportunities for UM undergraduates in research and creative activities, said forestry Professor David Jackson, a member of the UTU negotiating team. The council would make recommendations to the Faculty Senate, which in turn would have the opportunity to make recommendations if any curricular recommendations were needed, he said.

The statements about externally funded research and undergraduate research opportunities were important considerations for the administration, Schwaller said.

"These were important to satisfy external constituencies and to demonstrate the University's sincerity in moving ahead in a broad range of areas," he said. "After all, more than just the UTU and the administration were at the bargaining table. There were representatives of the governor's office, the Legislature, ASUM and other groups who participated originally."

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